



CASE STUDY

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CENTRAL ARIZONA

Location:

Phoenix, Arizona

Company Profile:

- Non-profit social service organization
- 54 employees in several offices and workspaces in Maricopa County
- Launched 18 full-time and 3 part-time teleworkers in March 2002

Business Benefits:

- Reduce lease expenses
- Increase time devoted to client contact
- Improve productivity

Environmental and Travel Benefits:

- BBBS' teleworkers reduce over 9,000 vehicle trips and 121,000 miles of travel, resulting in a reduction of over 3,200 pounds of pollutants annually



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Central Arizona

"When faced with the decision to incur real estate costs to make room for our growing staff, or to implement a telework program, the choice was clear. Telework has allowed us to dedicate monies we would have spent on additional office space directly to mentoring programs for Valley youth."

— Madeleine Stilwell
Executive Vice President of Administration

Challenges:

- The cost of equipment including communication services (e.g., high speed data)
- Coordinating the launch of the reorganization and basing employees at home
- Reducing office lease costs in light of existing lease obligations
- Maintaining seamless communication between headquarters and employee working from home
- Ensuring efficient access to the organization's database for teleworkers

Teleworkers report:

- Saving nearly an hour in commuting as a result of not driving to an office
- Few problems getting work completed on schedule

- An improvement in morale
- Stronger commitment to retaining employment with BBBS due to teleworking
- Over a 50% improvement in productivity
- Strong support from co-workers

Bottom Line Results:

- BBBS expects to save nearly \$30,000 in lease expenses as teleworking has reduced the need for office space and over \$9,000 annually in communication costs resulting from removal of telephone lines
- BBBS spent approximately \$9,700 to set up a Virtual Private Network that allows teleworkers secure access to the organization's data network

How the program got its start:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arizona faced a dual challenge at the beginning of 2002: to put a new organizational structure in place to improve service delivery; and secondly, to reduce operating expenses.

With 20 customer contact employees working from two separate satellite offices and part-time work spaces, BBBS was saddled with unnecessary lease obligations and operating expenses. Moreover, employees spent a considerable amount of time sitting in traffic often at the expense of being with clients.

BBBS' initial experiences with teleworking had shown that cost savings could be considerable. More importantly, employees who were working directly with youths and adults found they could have more time for one-on-one contact if they were able to work from home. In addition, employees staffing the main office were more productive if allowed to work away from the office on a part-time, but routine basis.

BBBS sought the assistance of the Valley Telework Project to identify organizational and technological considerations of teleworking and to help implement a telework program.

BBBS' telework steering committee was comprised of representatives from finance, information technology, human resources, and the organization's executive management team. Over a three-month period, the steering committee identified telework strategies, assessed benefits and costs, and devised implementation techniques and guidelines for teleworkers. Employees that had been teleworking provided advice on how to expand remote working to co-workers. The steering committee

made sure that teleworkers would be productive by modifying existing and acquiring new technologies to allow seamless communication and data access.

Lessons Learned:

- Involve representatives from departments affected by teleworking including finance, executive management, facilities, information systems/technology, and human resources in developing telework arrangements.
- Examine technological considerations carefully to make sure that employees working away from the office can function as if working in the 'main' office.
- Review communication protocols prior to starting telework arrangements in order to develop common expectations.
- Provide work spaces in a 'main' office for teleworkers to make sure that time spent in the office is productive.
- Coordinate schedules of 'in-office' meetings to minimize teleworker travel time.
- Have contingency plans for work to be performed if, and when, technological problems occur.
- Designate a contact to provide support for actions that require 'in-office' attention.
- Have teleworkers 'network' with each other (e.g., instant messaging, schedule lunch meetings) to help resolve problems specific to teleworkers.
- Make arrangements with business service centers to give teleworkers access to specialized services such as copying.
- Have in-house information technology system staff orient teleworkers to equipment and communication services prior to launching telework arrangements.